

" The Complaynt of Scotland."

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if they had quietly submitted to be effaced and robbed at the dictation of an ambitious, grasping priest, or neglected to take the first opportunity to make the Kirk pay for the ambitious priest's aggressive policy. The alienation of an influential class was indeed to cost the Kirk dear in the near future.

The character of the Scottish nobility drawn by a con

temporary, the author of " The Complaynt of Scotland " (i 549),

is, however, by no means flattering. The scribe was evi

dently an orthodox cleric, and, while he probes with gentle

touch the shortcomings of his own order, he is merciless

enough in exposing those of lords and lairds. His denuncia

tions may, however, be paralleled by those of Sir David

Lyndsay, whose satire, as we shall see, spared neither lord nor

prelate. A large section of the Scottish nobility, then, was

ready to betray their country for English gold. They were

as self-seeking and false as they were factious and turbulent

They were jealous and distrustful of one another, and for

" their particular profit" let the Commonweal perish. They

were greedy and hard in their dealings with their poor tenants,

whom they harried out of home and holding for their own

selfish gain. We may thus paraphrase the long complaint

which Commonalty, Dame Scotia's third son, makes to his

dolorous mother against his elder brother, Nobility. Com

monalty is, he laments, kicked and prodded like a dull ass.

He labours day and night to nourish lazy and useless men

who reward him by reducing him to beggary. They reive

from him his corn and his cattle. As in England, they rack-

rent him and turn him out of his stading. The labouring

man is a notable member of the realm, on whom  
both nobles  
and clergy depend for their existence, and yet  
he is treated  
as a slave, and has only the Eternal God to  
whom he may  
appeal for justice. Nevertheless, in this  
oppressed outcast  
the sense of human right has survived, and he  
angrily reminds  
both Nobility and Spirituality that originally he  
was the eldest  
of the three brothers. Adam and his  
successors were all  
tillers of the soil, and little enough reason have  
these modern  
upstart nobles to despise labouring men as  
rustic slaves,  
and plume themselves on their descent from  
angels and  
archangels instead of Father Adam. Let them  
remember  
that many of the most illustrious heroes of  
history have  
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